

Agritourism Study – WORKING DRAFT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Study Vision

The Agritourism Study seeks to celebrate the evolving nature of farming and farmland in Montgomery County through the promotion of agricultural education and tourism activities as well as historic and cultural resources while reinforcing the need for the continued preservation of farming, farmland and rural open space in the county's Agricultural Reserve.

Abbreviated Purpose and Need

Agricultural education and tourism activities create new opportunities to preserve farming, farmland and rural open space as well as enhance the economic viability of agriculture. With new opportunities, there are also new challenges, including defining education and tourism activities, the nexus of these activities to agriculture, the extent to which these activities should be regulated and the processes for regulating tourism activities.

Existing agricultural education and tourism activities, including farm-to-table activities, small-scale wineries and breweries, events and festivals have been largely considered on an inconsistent and individual basis to date. The lack of a comprehensive, consistent and transparent approach to agritourism has resulted in uncertainty for farmers, business owners, entrepreneurs, residents and county staff.¹

This study attempts to identify and assess opportunities and constraints for the evolution of the Ag Reserve, including agricultural activities that have expanded beyond traditional farming, to preserve and sustain agriculture in Montgomery County. The study's underlying aim is to encourage activities—agricultural education and tourism activities—that increase residents' knowledge and understanding of the county's Ag Reserve, enhance its attractiveness and economic viability as a destination and support its farms and the families that operate them, while preserving agricultural culture and heritage.

This study seeks to develop a comprehensive, consistent menu of potential solutions for the promotion of agricultural education and tourism activities, while maintaining the integrity of the agricultural and rural character of the Agricultural Reserve.

Overview of Goals and Potential Solutions

Overarching goals for the Agritourism Study include:

¹Zoning Text Amendment Number 18-03 (ZTA No. 18-03) concerning Farm Alcohol Production Standards, was initiated concurrently with the Agritourism Study. It was adopted and effective in October 2018 and sought to promote new wineries, breweries, distilleries and cideries through clarification of regulatory processes and promotion of economic development incentives. The Montgomery County Department of Permitting Services and Office of Agriculture developed an Agricultural Producer Certificate for Farm Alcohol Production for new applications. The certificate is available: <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/DPS/Process/zspe/Agricultural-Breweries.html>

- Protect and preserve farming, farmland and rural open space in the Agricultural Reserve.
- Support existing and future agritourism activities through improved processes for agritourism businesses and promotional tools.
- Support agritourism activities with a direct nexus to agriculture, to facilitate preservation of farming, farmland and rural open space.
- Increase awareness of the Agricultural Reserve’s assets, including education of agricultural practices and better wayfinding.
- Provide inclusive and equitable access to the Agricultural Reserve.

As there is no single solution to advance attainment of the study goals, the study identifies several potential solutions to promote, support and facilitate agritourism in Montgomery County. Each of the potential solutions recognizes the importance of maintaining the integrity of the natural, cultural and historic character of the Agricultural Reserve, as well as sustaining the economic viability of farming. Potential solutions range from developing an agritourism application process to provide consistency, predictability and transparency, to actively promoting and marketing agritourism and heritage tourism to Montgomery County residents, residents of the Washington Metropolitan Region and beyond.

INTRODUCTION

Study Background - (History and Context)

The Agricultural Reserve, established in 1980 with the adoption of the *Preservation of Agriculture and Rural Open Space Functional Master Plan*, is a land conservation policy designed to protect farmland, agriculture and rural open space. The result of decades of planning and policy development, beginning with the 1964 *General Plan (On Wedges and Corridors) for the Physical Development of the Maryland-Washington Regional District in Montgomery and Prince Georges Counties*, the “Ag Reserve” enables preservation of agricultural and rural open space by concentrating growth and development along defined corridors and population centers. It includes approximately 93,000 acres – nearly a third of the county’s land – and extends along the county’s northern, eastern and western borders – from the Patuxent River to the Potomac River.

The intent of the Agricultural Reserve, as defined by the Montgomery County Zoning Ordinance (Section 4.2.1.A) is to “promote agriculture as the primary land use in areas of the county designated for agricultural preservation in the general plan, the Functional Master Plan for Preservation of Agriculture and Rural Open Space, and other current or future master plans.”

INSERT MAP OF THE AG RESERVE HERE

While the *Preservation of Agriculture and Rural Open Space Functional Master Plan* enabled preservation of agriculture, farmland and rural open space, it did not anticipate the growing demand for agricultural tourism and its impact on the ongoing preservation effort.

Increased interest in agricultural education, tourism and entertainment has prompted discussion about opportunities to enhance the economic viability of the Ag Reserve including mechanisms to support and diversify existing farms, promote new farms and celebrate the economic, environmental and social value that the Ag Reserve provides to the residents of Montgomery County and the Washington Metropolitan Region.

The increased interest in agricultural education and tourism activities creates new opportunities to preserve farming and farmland as well as reinforce the agricultural economy. With these new opportunities, there are also new challenges, including defining the breadth of what constitutes “agritourism,” how to maintain the integrity of farming, farmland and rural open space and how to limit potential negative impacts of agritourism on the rural residential communities of the Ag Reserve. Further challenges include an inconsistent, undocumented process for the review and approval of agricultural education and tourism activities and the extent to which these activities should be regulated.

Relevant Plans and Studies

Existing plans and studies, including the 1980 *Preservation of Agriculture and Rural Open Space Functional Master Plan* and the 2002 *Montgomery County Heritage Area Management Plan* establish a framework for the preservation of agriculture, rural open space and cultural heritage, and seek to celebrate the county’s farming history. As these plans represent the initiation of agricultural preservation and the recognition of an evolving Ag Reserve, they are important resources for the Agritourism Study.

Preservation of Agriculture and Rural Open Space Functional Master Plan

The 1980 *Preservation of Agriculture and Rural Open Space Functional Master Plan* established specific agricultural and rural open space preservation recommendations, including incentives and regulations designed to mitigate development pressure and promote the preservation of agriculture and rural open space. The 1980 Plan focused on the preservation of farmland, but also established a policy framework to contribute to the continuation of farming in Montgomery County, through the separation of development rights from farmland.

The Plan identified several tools to preserve agriculture and rural open space, including the Ag Reserve, a zoning district created for the primary agricultural preservation areas, rural residential zones and the Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) program, a mechanism designed to compensate land owners in the Ag Reserve for transferring residential development potential from the farmland preservation areas into areas of the county better suited for growth.

The TDR program, paired with a sustained commitment to agricultural tourism and preservation of farmland by Montgomery County’s Office of Agriculture, has helped retain more than 500 farms, nearly 1,500 horse farms and stables and 350 horticulture businesses which significantly contribute to the county’s economy. The retention of these farms and their economic contributions to the county, are particularly notable in a metropolitan region where development pressures remain perpetual and intense.

Montgomery County Heritage Area Management Plan

The *Montgomery County Heritage Area Management Plan*, completed in 2002 for the Montgomery County Heritage Area Advisory Committee, sought to elevate the prominence of the county’s heritage for residents and visitors and strengthen the connection between the county’s history and future. The Plan focused on three themes of the county’s heritage: Farming History; Quakers and the Underground Railroad; and Technological Innovation. The Plan recognized the value of tourism and economic

development to sustain the county's agricultural and cultural heritage and established a strategic direction, action items and a framework for implementation to celebrate the county's heritage.

Existing Agritourism Resources

The Montgomery County Office of Agriculture, in cooperation with several state and local agencies as well as nonprofit organizations, provides support to the county's agricultural community. This support includes technical assistance to farmers and agritourism entrepreneurs to navigate regulatory and legislative processes as well as assistance to market agricultural products. Initiatives such as the annual Farm Tour and Harvest Sale, farmer's markets, community supported agriculture, connections to regional wholesale buyers and a farm directory, support farmers and agritourism entrepreneurs in marketing their products to improve the economic viability of agriculture in Montgomery County.

The Office of Agriculture also serves as a liaison between the agricultural community and the Maryland Rural Enterprise Development Center, an initiative of the University of Maryland Extension within the college of Agriculture and Natural Resources. The Rural Enterprise Development Center provides a variety of technical assistance to farmers and property owners, including farm business planning, production and management techniques, selection of special crops and support for trending agricultural enterprises in Maryland, including agritourism.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Farming and farmland have evolved since the establishment of the Ag Reserve nearly four decades ago. In 1978, just prior to the establishment of the Ag Reserve, Montgomery County had 667 farms. This number remained relatively stable until 1992, when the number of farms decreased to 561. As shown in Figure 1, the number of farms has remained stable since the 1990s, with 558 farms identified in the 2017 Census of Agriculture produced by the United States Department of Agriculture.

While the number of farms has remained stable in the last 25 years, the average size of each farm has decreased from 178 acres in 1978 to 117 acres in 2017. During that same period, the amount of land devoted to farming decreased by nearly half, from 115,316 acres of farmland to 65,537 acres of farmland in 2017, as shown in Figure 2. Traditional agricultural activities, including grain farms and livestock operations have sustained, with an increase in the horticulture and equestrian industries. The equestrian industry, including breeders, stables and facilities devoted to lessons, rentals, competitions and summer camps represent a significant component of the county's agricultural industry, with approximately 10,000 horses in the county in 2017.²

² In 2004, the definition of farming in Chapter 59 of the Montgomery County Code, the Zoning Ordinance, was amended to include horses and equestrian facilities. This amendment reflected a recognition of the growing demand for agritourism, with individuals seeking equestrian lessons, rentals, competitions and events.

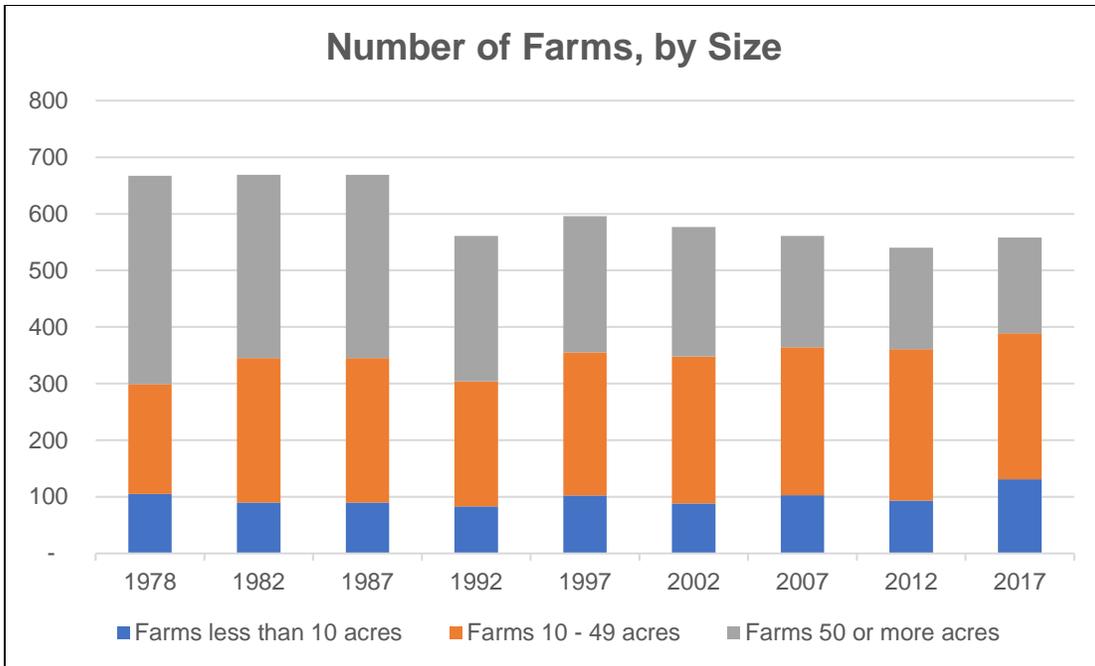


Figure 1: Number of Farms, by Size (Census of Agriculture, 1978-2017)

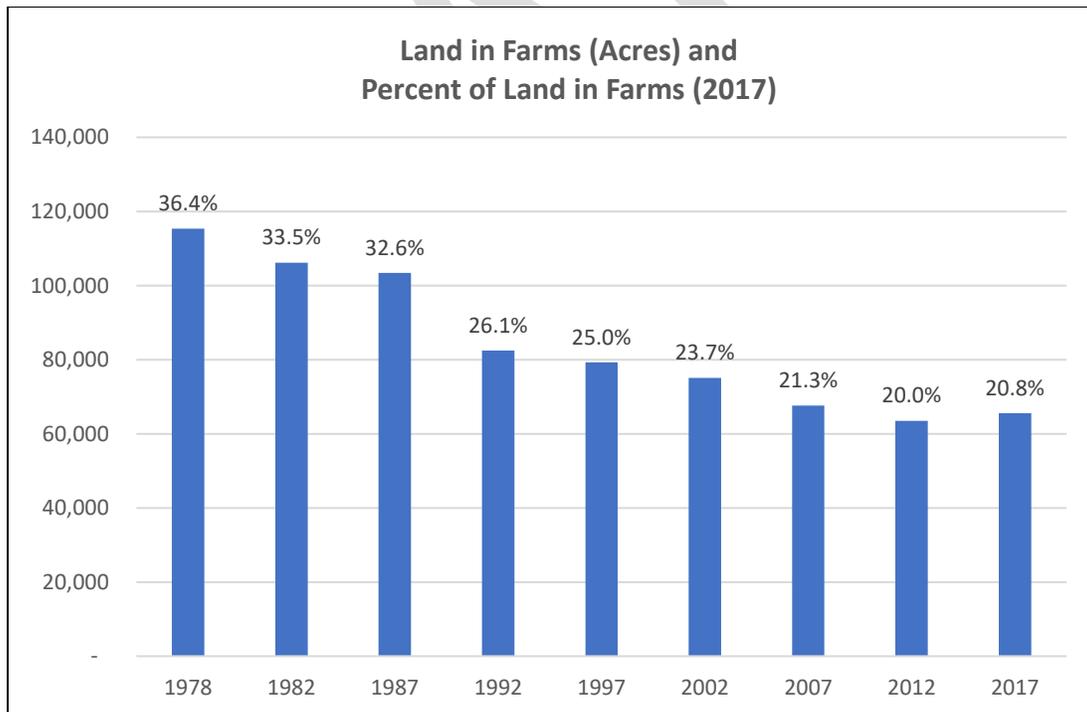


Figure 2: Land in Farms (Acres) and Percent of Land in Farms (2017) (Census of Agriculture, 1978-2017)

In addition to the growing prevalence of nurseries, sod farms, landscape companies, horse farms and equestrian facilities, there is also growing interest in agricultural education and tourism activities. Recognizing the evolution of farmland and farming, the Montgomery County Zoning Ordinance was updated in 2014 to permit agricultural education and tourism activities as an accessory use to farming. While the Zoning Ordinance does not explicitly define “agritourism,” it defines farming, agriculture and agricultural education and tourism activities as shown in Figure 3:

FIGURE 3:

Farming: “the practice of agriculture on a property, and any associated buildings.”

Agriculture: “the business, science, and art of cultivating and managing the soil; composting, growing, harvesting and selling crops, and the products of forestry, horticulture, and hydroponics; breeding, raising, managing or selling livestock, including horses, poultry, fish, game, and fur-bearing animals; dairying, beekeeping, and similar activities; and equestrian events and activities.” Agriculture also “includes processing on the farm of an agricultural product to prepare the product for market and may cause a change in the natural form or state of the product.”

Agricultural education and tourism, are permitted as an accessory use to farming and are “conducted as part of a farm’s regular operations, with emphasis on hands-on experiences and events that foster increased knowledge of agriculture, including cultivation methods, animal care, water conservation, Maryland’s farming history, the importance of eating healthy, and locally grown foods. Allowed activities include corn mazes, hayrides, and educational tours, classes and workshops.” The Zoning Ordinance limits the maximum size of structures for agricultural education and tourism activities as well as requires approved sanitation facilities for the accessory use.

As shown in Appendix B, there are nearly 40 agricultural education and tourism activities as well as heritage tourism sites in Montgomery County, including farm markets, pick-your-own operations, community-supported agriculture (CSA) farms, animal sanctuaries, equestrian operations, breweries, wineries and other enterprises. In addition, there are also several historical and cultural resources that are supported by the preservation of the Ag Reserve. These include two National Register Districts, the Seneca Historic District and the C&O Canal Historic District as well as locally designated districts, sites and resources. These historical and cultural resources represent Montgomery County’s early agricultural, cultural and industrial heritage.

The existing agritourism and heritage tourism enterprises are largely oriented toward educational entertainment, offering opportunities for visitors to directly connect with agriculture through activities such as pick-your-own, hayrides and corn mazes. The agricultural education and tourism activities, paired with the historical and cultural resources, provide a unique opportunity to promote, market and activate the Ag Reserve as well as reinforce the need for its continued preservation.

Relevant Stakeholders

Agritourism involves a range of stakeholders, including farmers, business owners, landowners, artisans, equestrian operations, farm alcohol producers, event hosts, environmentalists, preservationists and residents in the Ag Reserve to residents of Montgomery County and the Washington Metropolitan Region. While these stakeholders are most directly affected by agritourism, all County residents benefit from the existence of and the ability to visit the Ag Reserve.

Study Purpose and Need

Increased interest in agricultural education, tourism and entertainment have allowed farmers to diversify their business, while preserving farming and farmland. Apart from equestrian events and the recently adopted farm alcohol production standards, governing wineries, breweries, distilleries and cideries, agritourism venues and events have been discussed and addressed individually as these initiatives have emerged. The Agritourism Study seeks to develop a comprehensive, countywide approach to promote agricultural tourism, while preserving the agricultural and rural character as well as the intent of the Ag Reserve.

This study attempts to identify and assess opportunities and constraints for the evolution of the Ag Reserve, including agricultural activities that have expanded beyond traditional farming, to preserve and sustain agriculture in Montgomery County. The study's underlying aim is to encourage activities—agricultural education and tourism activities—that increase residents' knowledge and understanding of the county's Ag Reserve, enhance its attractiveness and economic viability as a destination and support its farms and the families that operate them, while preserving agricultural culture and heritage.

STUDY PROCESS / OUTREACH

Agritourism Study Advisory Committee

The Planning Department formed the Agritourism Study Advisory Committee (ASAC) in October 2017 and formally invited members of the agricultural community, industry experts, governmental representatives and community members. The role of the ASAC was to review the progress of the study and provide guidance at key intervals or decision points during the development of the study. The representation on the ASAC was intended to provide a balanced discourse on the current issues, impacts and status of agritourism in Montgomery County.

The ASAC met regularly over two years and discussions focused on the following themes:

- The Ag Reserve should be protected and preserved, but also evolve to enhance economic viability of farming and agricultural land, including agricultural economic development through tourism.
 - As agritourism evolves, the Ag Reserve's unique ability to produce agricultural products for the region must be preserved.
- The Ag Reserve has evolved since its establishment.
 - Traditional farming activities have evolved to maintain economic viability.
 - Increased education and awareness are necessary to convey how and why we have the Ag Reserve.
 - Ongoing agritourism activities and events are increasing and evolving, with an increased interest in and demand for access to the Ag Reserve countywide.
- Challenges to supporting agritourism today, as well as in the future, include:
 - An inconsistent, undocumented process for agritourism businesses.
 - Adequate facilities and infrastructure to accommodate events.
 - Balancing the need for flexibility with clear regulations.

The themes, supported by a majority of the Committee members, provided the foundation for the goals of the study and guided the potential solutions identified to advance achievement of the study goals.

Comparative Review of Agritourism Policies and Code Assessment

In the last several years, agritourism has grown significantly in many areas across the United States – including in the Washington Metropolitan Region. According to the Census of Agriculture produced by the United States Department of Agriculture, the number of farms participating in agritourism and recreational services – including activities such as hunting and fishing- significantly increased in the last several years, with nearly 30,000 farms in 2017. Farms with agritourism and recreational services have also grown significantly in both Maryland and Virginia, as shown in Figure 4.

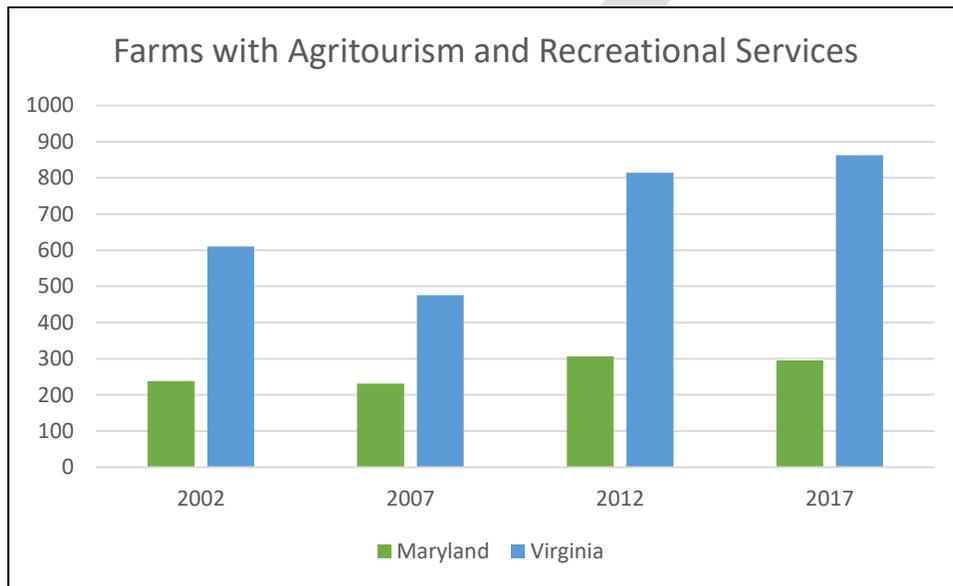


Figure 4: Farms with Agritourism and Recreational Services (Census of Agriculture, 2002-2017)

According to the Census of Agriculture, Montgomery County has experienced an increase in farms participating in agritourism and recreational services since 2002, but the growth of agritourism in Montgomery County has not kept pace with other locations in the Washington Metropolitan Region. Loudoun County, Virginia, for example, has significantly outpaced Montgomery County in the number of agritourism operations, as shown in Figure 5.

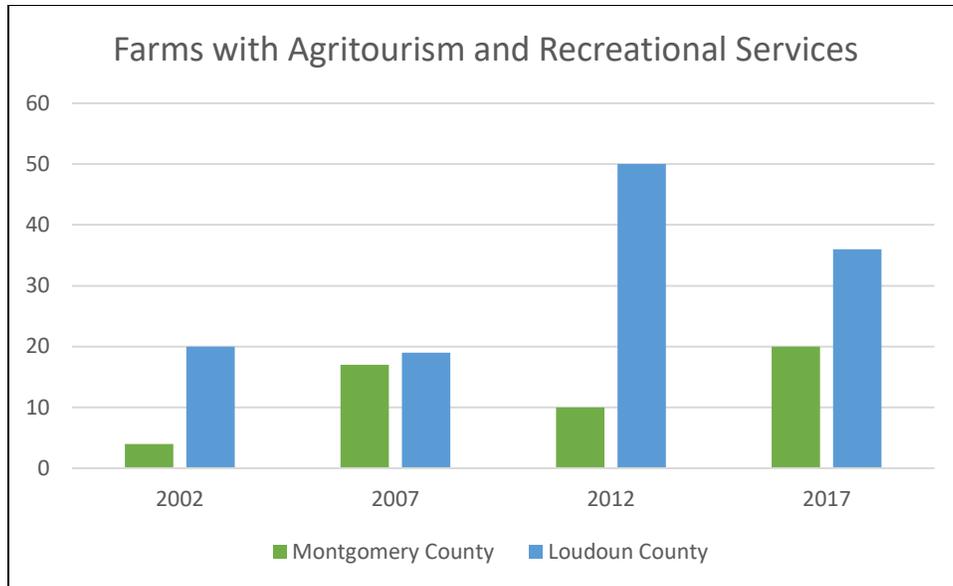


Figure 5: Farms with Agritourism and Recreational Services (Census of Agriculture, 2002-2017)

However, between 2012 and 2017 the number of farms participating in agritourism and recreational services doubled in Montgomery County, from ten to twenty farms.

Montgomery Planning engaged a consultant team to conduct a study of agritourism policies and regulations in Montgomery County and comparable jurisdictions within the Washington Metropolitan Region and across the United States to identify strategies for managing, regulating and promoting agritourism. The Comparative Review of Agritourism Policies and Code Assessment, prepared by Rhodeside & Harwell and EPR, PC, are included in Appendix D.

The review of ten comparable jurisdictions and the assessment of Montgomery County's Zoning Ordinance, Subdivision Ordinance and Building Code were used to inform this study. The comparative review and code assessment provided an increased awareness of potential challenges with promoting agritourism as well as potential solutions for successfully promoting, marketing and advancing agritourism in Montgomery County.

AGRITOURISM STUDY GOALS

During their June 26 meeting, the ASAC established the following goals to guide the Agritourism Study:

- Protect and preserve farming, farmland and rural open space in the Agricultural Reserve.
- Support existing and future agritourism activities through improved processes for agritourism businesses and promotional tools.
- Support agritourism activities with a direct nexus to agriculture, to facilitate preservation of farming, farmland and rural open space.
- Increase awareness of the Ag Reserve's assets, including education of agricultural practices and better wayfinding.
- Provide inclusive and equitable access to the Ag Reserve.

MENU OF POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS

There is no single solution to advance attainment of the study goals. For this reason, the study identifies several potential solutions to promote, support and facilitate agritourism in Montgomery County. Each of the potential solutions recognizes the importance of maintaining the integrity of the natural, cultural and historic character of the Ag Reserve, as well as sustaining the economic viability of farming.

The potential solutions are organized by the study goal that each solution supports. Prospective partners in the implementation of each solution are also identified.

Goal: *Protect and preserve farming, farmland and rural open space in the Agricultural Reserve.*

1a.	Potential Solution:	Establish criteria to confirm that agriculture is the primary use of the property for new agritourism initiatives, consistent with the intent of the Agricultural Reserve zone.
	Potential Mechanism:	Document criteria in interdepartmental memoranda to provide consistent staff guidance.
	Prospective Partners:	Montgomery County Office of Agriculture <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Agricultural Advisory Committee ▪ Agricultural Preservation Advisory Board Montgomery County Department of Permitting Services
1b.	Potential Solution:	Continue to provide funding and support, including staff resources and marketing, to sustain and grow the Office of Agriculture’s New Farmer Project to provide mentoring and specialized business training to new farmers.
	Potential Mechanism:	Identify funding source
	Prospective Partners:	Montgomery County Office of Agriculture Maryland Agricultural and Resource-Based Industry Development Corporation University of Maryland Extension
1c.	Potential Solution:	Provide funding and staff resources to support the expedited review of new farms and farming operations.
	Potential Mechanism:	Identify funding source
	Prospective Partners:	Montgomery County Office of Agriculture Montgomery County Department of Permitting Services
1d.	Potential Solution:	Conduct a comprehensive traffic analysis, including baseline analyses and peak-agritourism season analyses, to understand circulation challenges and opportunities in the Agricultural Reserve.
	Potential Mechanism:	Study
	Prospective Partners:	Montgomery Planning Montgomery County Department of Transportation Montgomery County Office of Agriculture <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Agricultural Advisory Committee

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Agricultural Preservation Advisory Board Rustic Roads Advisory Committee
--	--	---

Goal: *Support existing and future agritourism activities through improved processes for agritourism businesses and promotional tools.*

2a.	Potential Solution:	Coordinate with the University of Maryland Extension to support agritourism, including the development of a Beginning Agritourism Guidebook, like the “Beginning Farmer Guidebook,” assistance with strategic diversification and business and marketing plans.
	Potential Mechanism:	Online Resources
	Prospective Partners:	University of Maryland Extension Montgomery County Office of Agriculture Montgomery County Economic Development Corporation

2b.	Potential Solution:	Develop an agritourism application with checklists, instructions, general standards and links to applicable resources to provide consistency, predictability and transparency for agritourism businesses and entrepreneurs, similar to the Agricultural Producer Certificate for Farm Alcohol Production (Refer to Appendix E).
	Potential Mechanism:	Online Resources
	Prospective Partners:	Montgomery County Department of Permitting Services Montgomery County Office of Agriculture <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Agricultural Advisory Committee ▪ Agricultural Preservation Advisory Board

2c.	Potential Solution:	Develop and document a process for the review and approval of agritourism applications, including review by the Montgomery County Office of Agriculture and either the Agricultural Advisory Committee, or the Agricultural Preservation Advisory Board, if the venue is subject to an agricultural easement.
	Potential Mechanism:	Distribute interdepartmental memoranda to document the review and approval process.
	Prospective Partners:	Montgomery County Department of Permitting Services Destination Marketing Organization – Visit Montgomery Montgomery County Economic Development Corporation Montgomery County Office of Agriculture <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Agricultural Advisory Committee ▪ Agricultural Preservation Advisory Board Montgomery Planning Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services Montgomery Soil Conservation District

2d.	Potential Solution:	Complete a feasibility study to identify appropriate county-owned land to accommodate visitor serving uses and facilities, including restrooms and parking, in the Agricultural Reserve which support agricultural education and tourism activities as well as historic and cultural resources.
	Potential Mechanism:	Feasibility study
	Prospective Partners:	Montgomery County Department of General Services Montgomery Parks Montgomery Planning Visit Montgomery
2e.	Potential Solution:	Exempt agricultural buildings used for agritourism from certain permit requirements, pursuant to the Maryland Public Safety Code Section 12-508.
	Potential Mechanism:	Montgomery County Council approves application of Maryland Public Safety Code Section 12-508 to Montgomery County.
	Prospective Partners:	Montgomery County Council Montgomery County Department of Permitting Services Montgomery Planning Montgomery County Office of Agriculture
2f.	Potential Solution:	Establish an Interagency Working Group to review relevant Chapters of the Montgomery County Code to identify opportunities for refinement, enhancement and modifications to support agritourism. Topics of discussion may include use permits, historic area work permits, building permits, occupancy permits, on-site sewage facilities, parking, access and signage.
	Potential Mechanism:	Distribute interagency memoranda to form the Interagency Working Group
	Prospective Partners:	Montgomery County Office of Agriculture Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services Montgomery County Department of Permitting Services Montgomery Planning Montgomery Soil Conservation District
2g.	Potential Solution:	Identify suitable alternatives to portable toilets, such as bathroom trailers or on-site holding tanks. Determine procedure to pursue suitable alternatives.
	Potential Mechanism:	Study

	Prospective Partners:	Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services Montgomery County Department of Permitting Services Montgomery County Office of Agriculture
2h.	Potential Solution:	Develop a program within the Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services, Licensure and Regulatory Services Division, to specifically serve agritourism businesses and assist with applications, plans, fees, permitting and licenses for the county and state. Consider waiving or reducing fees for new agritourism businesses.
	Potential Mechanism:	Identify funding source
	Prospective Partners:	Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services
2i.	Potential Solution:	Identify funding and staff resources to promote and market the Agricultural Reserve, agritourism and heritage tourism to Montgomery County residents, residents of the Washington Metropolitan Region and tourists.
	Potential Mechanism:	Identify funding source, websites, printed materials, social media and web-based applications
	Prospective Partners:	Destination Marketing Organization – Visit Montgomery Montgomery County Economic Development Corporation Heritage Montgomery
2j.	Potential Solution:	Develop a resident awareness program to educate and inform Montgomery County residents about the Agricultural Reserve.
	Potential Mechanism:	Meetings, Tours and Online Resources
	Prospective Partners:	Montgomery County Office of Agriculture Montgomery Planning Montgomery County Regional Services Center Directors and Citizen Advisory Boards Heritage Montgomery
2k.	Potential Solution:	Develop and promote a Montgomery County Agritourism website to provide resources and a single point of contact for questions related to agritourism.
	Potential Mechanism:	Online Resources
	Prospective Partners:	Montgomery County Office of Agriculture Montgomery County Department of Permitting Services Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services University of Maryland Extension

2l.	Potential Solution:	Maintain rustic roads pursuant to the maintenance and improvement requirements in the Montgomery County Code.
	Potential Mechanism:	Study
	Prospective Partners:	Montgomery County Department of Transportation Montgomery County Office of Agriculture Montgomery Planning Rustic Roads Advisory Committee

Goal: *Support agritourism activities with a direct nexus to agriculture, to facilitate preservation of farming, farmland and rural open space.*

3a.	Potential Solution:	Develop, document and publish an agritourism policy and administrative review process to provide guidance on the types of agritourism activities permitted, their nexus to agriculture and the process for review and approval of agritourism activities.
	Potential Mechanism:	Online Resources
	Prospective Partners:	Montgomery County Office of Agriculture Montgomery County Department of Permitting Services Agricultural Advisory Committee

3b.	Potential Solution:	Define agritourism as an accessory use to farming. Establish standards and a tiered approach for agricultural education and tourism activities that distinguishes those that can occur as a matter of right from those that require discretionary approval (including administrative or conditional use).
	Potential Mechanism:	Zoning Text Amendment
	Prospective Partners:	Montgomery Planning Montgomery County Office of Agriculture <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Agricultural Advisory Committee ▪ Agricultural Preservation and Advisory Board Montgomery County Department of Permitting Services

3c.	Potential Solution:	Define agritourism as an accessory use to farming. Establish an overlay zone for the Agricultural Reserve (AR) Zone to identify permitted agritourism uses and established standards and a tiered approach for agritourism that distinguishes the uses and standards that can occur as a matter of right from those that require discretionary approval (including administrative or conditional use).
	Potential Mechanism:	Zoning Text Amendment to Establish the Overlay Zone
	Prospective Partners:	Montgomery Planning Montgomery County Office of Agriculture

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Agricultural Advisory Committee ▪ Agricultural Preservation Advisory Board Montgomery County Department of Permitting Services
--	--	---

3d.	Potential Solution:	Periodically review evolving agritourism activities, the tiered classification system, if adopted, and assess cumulative impacts (positive and negative) of agritourism.
	Potential Mechanism:	Meetings, Annual Monitoring Report
	Prospective Partners:	Montgomery County Office of Agriculture <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Agricultural Advisory Committee ▪ Agricultural Preservation Advisory Board Montgomery County Department of Permitting Services Montgomery Planning

3e.	Potential Solution:	Conduct an analysis of publicly owned rural open space and its proximity to agritourism venues to identify opportunities to connect parks and agritourism activities.
	Potential Mechanism:	Study
	Prospective Partners:	Montgomery Planning Montgomery Parks

Goal: *Increase awareness of the Ag Reserve’s assets, including education of agricultural practices and better wayfinding.*

4a.	Potential Solution:	Provide funding and support, including staff resources, to expand the Food, Fiber and You Mobile Science Lab.
	Potential Mechanism:	Identify funding source
	Prospective Partners:	Montgomery County Public Schools Montgomery County Office of Agriculture Maryland Agricultural Education Foundation, Inc.

4b.	Potential Solution:	Develop a database of farms and agritourism activities that provide internship opportunities to train students, future farmers, and future agritourism entrepreneurs.
	Potential Mechanism:	Online Resources
	Prospective Partners:	Montgomery County Office of Agriculture Montgomery County Public Schools University of Maryland Extension

4c.	Potential Solution:	Develop a series of agritourism and heritage tourism “trails” to connect various agritourism and heritage tourism activities. The “trails” could be grouped by type of activity, area of the Agricultural Reserve, or means of transportation, among other categories.
	Potential Mechanism:	Online Resources and Web-Based Applications
	Prospective Partners:	Destination Marketing Organization – Visit Montgomery Heritage Montgomery

		Montgomery Planning
--	--	---------------------

4d.	Potential Solution:	Create a consolidated online calendar of offerings and events throughout the Agricultural Reserve.
	Potential Mechanism:	Online Resources
	Prospective Partners:	Destination Marketing Organization – Visit Montgomery Montgomery County Office of Agriculture Montgomery Countryside Alliance Heritage Montgomery

4e.	Potential Solution:	Continue to highlight and promote stories of farmers working in the Agricultural Reserve through video narratives.
	Potential Mechanism:	Online Resources, Media
	Prospective Partners:	Destination Marketing Organization – Visit Montgomery Montgomery County Office of Agriculture Montgomery Planning Montgomery Countryside Alliance

4f.	Potential Solution:	Develop a comprehensive wayfinding signage system to direct patrons to agritourism venues, heritage tourism venues and other resources in the Agricultural Reserve.
	Potential Mechanism:	Wayfinding Study
	Prospective Partners:	Montgomery County Office of Agriculture Montgomery Planning Montgomery Countryside Alliance Heritage Montgomery

Goal: *Provide inclusive and equitable access to the Agricultural Reserve.*

5a.	Potential Solution:	Develop and distribute a countywide survey to understand who participates in agritourism and heritage tourism. If residents do not participate in agritourism or heritage tourism, inquire why. Are residents unfamiliar, unable to access the activities, or feel unwelcome?
	Potential Mechanism:	Online survey
	Prospective Partners:	Montgomery County Office of Agriculture Montgomery Planning Heritage Montgomery

5b.	Potential Solution:	Provide shuttles or on-demand buses to significant events in the Agricultural Reserve, such as the Farm Tour and the Harvest Festival, or during peak agritourism season, from Montgomery County’s Equity Emphasis Areas or key destinations.
	Potential Mechanism:	Shuttles or on-demand buses
	Prospective Partners:	Destination Marketing Organization – Visit Montgomery

		Montgomery County Office of Agriculture Montgomery County Department of Transportation
--	--	---

5c.	Potential Solution:	Bring the Agricultural Reserve to other portions of the County through farmer’s markets, community supported agriculture or direct marketing to consumers through programs such as Imperfect Produce or Misfits Market.
	Potential Mechanism:	Farmer’s Markets and Online Resources
	Prospective Partners:	Montgomery County Office of Agriculture Montgomery County Regional Services Centers Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services

5d.	Potential Solution:	Initiate promote and market celebrations and festivals in the Agricultural Reserve that are representative of Montgomery County’s increasingly diverse population.
	Potential Mechanism:	Celebrations and Festivals
	Prospective Partners:	Destination Marketing Organization – Visit Montgomery Montgomery County Office of Community Partnerships Montgomery County Regional Services Centers Montgomery County Office of Agriculture Montgomery Countryside Alliance

IMPLEMENTATION

Under Development.

CONCLUSION

Under Development.

APPENDIX A: HISTORY OF THE AGRICULTURAL RESERVE

Formation of the Agricultural Reserve

In 1964 Montgomery County adopted its first General Plan – *The General Plan (On Wedges and Corridors) for the Physical Development of the Maryland-Washington Regional District in Montgomery and Prince George’s Counties*. This plan was a precursor to the Smart Growth concept, concentrating development in corridors and preserving wedges of open space between the corridors. The plan combined fiscal and social responsibility by avoiding haphazard or “leapfrog” development and established future infrastructure extensions like roads, water, sewer, schools, and emergency services.

The 1969 General Plan Update reiterated the policies of the 1964 plan, but the rural areas of the county were discussed as one large “wedge” without distinguishing between different land uses. The 1969 “Program Open Space,” established by the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, provided financial and technical assistance to local subdivisions for the planning, acquisition, and/or development of recreational land or open space areas. This program symbolized Maryland’s efforts to conserve natural resources while providing exceptional outdoor opportunities for residents. This program was the first program to implement land preservation and conceived the idea of an Agricultural Reserve in Montgomery County.

Montgomery County adopted its first Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance (APFO) in 1973. An APFO is an important growth management tool used by rapidly growing counties and municipalities to direct growth in suitable areas where facilities such as roads, sewers, public water, and schools are adequate. The same year, the County Council broadly applied the Rural Zone designation to most of the land in the “Rural Wedge” through a Sectional Map Amendment. The Rural Zone created a lower density cap of one unit per every five acres, setting the foundation for protection of the Rural Wedge.

By the late 1970s, it was increasingly clear that the Rural Zone was ineffective in reducing farmland conversions to non-agricultural uses. The county determined that the existing septic system suitability policy was inadequate to guide future population density and the lack of public water or sewer did not deter development activity, especially given new advances in small scale community sewerage system technology. The county reviewed and evaluated the viability and methods of protection of the low-density Rural Wedge, resulting in the 1979 “Issues and Alternatives Report for the Protection of the Rural Wedge.” This report identified that an economically viable critical mass of farmland still existed in the county and identified alternative methods for the preservation of that land.

Four master plans and studies completed in 1980, including the *Preservation of Agriculture and Rural Open Space (AROS) Functional Master Plan*, the *Olney Master Plan*, the *Sandy Spring / Ashton Special Study Plan*, and the *Poolesville Vicinity Master Plan* initiated and formed the Agricultural Reserve. These plans and studies identified specific agricultural protection areas and techniques, the Rural Cluster zone and the Rural Density Transfer (RDT) zone.

Transfer of Development Rights and Building Lot Terminations

Lands designated as the Agricultural Reserve in the 1980 *AROS Plan* were in the Rural Density Transfer (RDT) zone.³ The development density within the RDT zone was one unit per 25 acres, a significant

³ The RDT zone was renamed the AR zone with the 2014 comprehensive zoning code rewrite.

“downzoning” from the one unit per five acres allowed in the rural zone. To compensate landowners for this “downzoning,” the Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) program was implemented. This program established density “sending areas” and density “receiving areas.” Property owners in the RDT zone could “send” their density to other areas in the county by selling their excess development rights to land developers in those specified receiving areas, who could then use this “bonus density” in their projects in the receiving areas.

The number of development rights available to a landowner was based on the density of the Rural zone at the time: one right per five acres. Thus, an owner who owned 100 acres of land would have 20 development rights. Theoretically, these 100 acres could be further subdivided into four 25-acre lots, using four of those 20 rights, but would leave 16 rights to sell to a developer for a project elsewhere in the county. Or that owner could retain one right for their dwelling unit and sell 19 rights.

The owners of land in the Ag Reserve were able to sell their development rights and still retain the title to their land without the need to carve small residential lots from a farm. The sale of these rights could help finance farm equipment or make other capital improvements to the farm and offered an economic incentive to farmers to resist development pressure.

In 2013 the Building Lot Termination (BLT) Program was created establishing a new land preservation tool for properties in the Agricultural Reserve. The BLT program effectively decreased density in the Agricultural Reserve by extinguishing the right to build a dwelling unit and transferring that density to Commercial-Residential (CR) and Life Sciences Center (LSC) zones. Acquisition of whole or partial BLTs is required for all optional method projects in the Commercial-Residential (CR) and Life Sciences Center (LSC) zones and an option for public benefit points in the Commercial-Residential Town (CRT) and Employment Office (EOF) zones.

While the TDR and BLT Programs are effective tools to preserve farming, farmland and rural open space, there are some unintended challenges with these programs – including a reliance on private development to purchase development rights. Specifically, recent development applications have not elected to maximize density or pursued an alternative combination of public benefits and amenities to support incentive density, and therefore have not pursued purchase of TDRs or BLTs. While the TDR and BLT programs provide an opportunity for landowners to sell their development rights, the market to purchase these rights is not robust. Further, removal of the development rights reduces equity in the property, which can limit the ability for landowners to secure financing for continued capital and operational expenditures. These are important factors in the evolution of agricultural education and tourism activities, as these initiatives provide an opportunity for farmers to diversify their income and enhance the economic viability of continuing farming operations.

APPENDIX B: EXISTING AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION AND TOURISM AND HERITAGE TOURISM

	<u>Agritourism / Heritage Tourism Business</u>	<u>Category</u>
1	Agricultural History Farm Park	Heritage ⁴
2	Aix La Chapelle Farm	Entertainment ⁵ Heritage
3	Black Ankle Vineyards	Direct Sales
4	Blueberry Gardens	Entertainment
5	Brookeville Beer Farm	Direct Sales ⁶ Heritage
6	Burnt Hill Project (Pending)	Direct Sales
7	Butler's Orchard	Entertainment
8	Calleva Farm	Education
9	East Rivendell Farm	Direct Sales
10	Elder Pine Brewing and Blending	Direct Sales
11	FarmAtHome Produce	Entertainment
12	Fox Hollow Farm	Direct Sales
13	Great Meadows Farm	Entertainment
14	Heyser Farms	Direct Sales
15	Historic Button Farm	Heritage
16	Homestead Farm	Entertainment
17	King Barn Dairy MOOseum	Heritage
18	Kingsbury Orchard	Direct Sales
19	Lewis Orchard	Entertainment
20	Lone Oak Brewing Company (Pending)	Direct Sales
21	Madison Fields	Education
22	Naughty Pine Nursery	Entertainment
23	Oakley Cabin (The Friends of Oakley Cabin and the Underground Railroad)	Heritage
24	Pleasant Valley Farm Produce	Direct Sales
25	Poplar Spring Animal Sanctuary	Heritage
26	Red Wiggler Community Farm	Education ⁷
27	Rock Hill Orchard & Woodbourne Creamery	Entertainment
28	Rocklands Farm & Winery	Direct Sales
29	Sandy Spring Museum	Heritage
30	Sandy Spring Slave Museum	Heritage
31	Soleado Lavender Farm LLC	Entertainment
32	Sugarloaf Mountain Vineyard	Direct Sales
33	Susanna Farm (Pending)	Direct Sales

⁴ Heritage: Connects visitors to agricultural history.

⁵ Entertainment: Visitors connect with agriculture, through activities, such as pick-your-own and hayrides.

⁶ Direct Sales: Provides food and/or beverages from farm, can include on-site market with farm products, farm-to-table events, breweries, wineries, cideries, and restaurants.

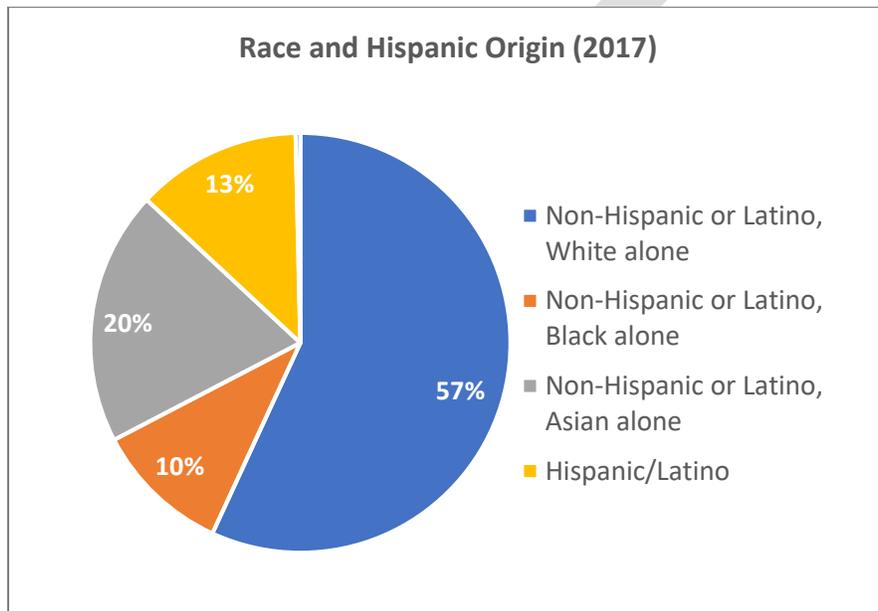
⁷ Educates farmers and/or visitors about agriculture.

34	Tusculum Farm	Entertainment
35	Waredaca Brewing Company	Direct Sales
36	Waters Orchard and Doc Waters Cidery	Entertainment
37	Windridge Vineyards	Direct Sales
38	61 Vineyard (Pending)	Direct Sales

DRAFT

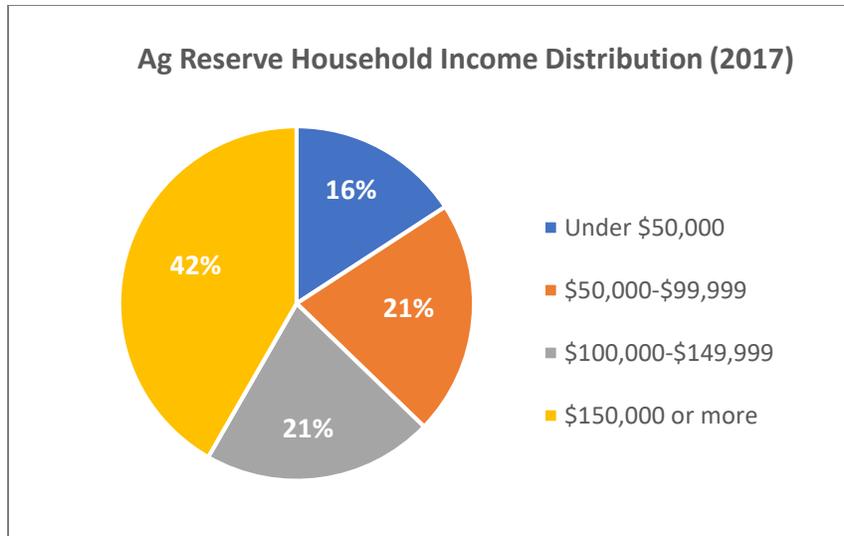
APPENDIX C: AGRICULTURAL RESERVE – DEMOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS

The total population of the Agricultural Reserve was 36,503 in 2017, less than 4 percent of Montgomery County’s total population. The average household size was 2.96, larger than the county’s average household size of 2.63. Though the age distribution of the residents in the Ag Reserve is like the rest of the county, the racial and ethnic makeup of the Ag Reserve is different. The majority of residents in the Ag Reserve are white (55 percent) as compared to the county’s 45 percent. The percentage of black (10 percent) and Hispanic residents (12 percent) are lower in the Ag Reserve, compared to the county (18 percent and 19 percent, respectively), while the percentage of Asian residents is higher (19 percent compared to the county’s 15 percent).



Source: 2013-2017 American Community Survey, 5-year estimate.

The majority of households (86 percent) in the Ag Reserve own their homes, as compared to 66 percent of the entire county. The average income of households in the Ag Reserve is \$153,271.10, higher than the county average of \$140,141.38. There are also a higher percentage of households (42 percent) earning \$150,000 or more, in comparison to the overall county (32 percent). Most households are families headed by married couples (68 percent), higher than county (54 percent). Most residents commute to work by driving alone (77 percent), as compared to 65 percent of the county residents.



Source: 2013-2017 American Community Survey, 5-year estimate.

In 2017, 90 percent of farms in Montgomery County reported access to the internet, compared to 77 percent in 2007. While 90 percent of Montgomery County farms have access to the internet, the service is often satellite-based with limited reliability.

APPENDIX D: COMPARATIVE REVIEW AND CODE ANALYSIS

APPENDIX E: AGRICULTURAL PRODUCER CERTIFICATE FOR FARM ALCOHOL PRODUCTION

APPENDIX F: RESOURCES

Under Development